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ABSTRACT

The construction and reconstruction of public school and college curricula cannot be understood without an understanding of how they are intimately tied to larger social currents and cross-currents. This book attempts to provide a coherent yet inconclusive synthesis of the progressive tradition that challenges both the curricular status quo and the recent attempts at a conservative restoration. Chapter 1 presents an overview of the field of curriculum studies, examining the central epistemological assumptions and the overriding values that have governed past curriculum debates between the conservative and progressive traditions. The second chapter examines the educational agenda of the new right and the philosophical and normative assumptions that undergird it, with a focus on moral and multicultural education and classical liberal conceptions of the individual, market economics, moral deliberation, and the state. Chapter 3 outlines more progressive educational agendas, particularly those related to revised understandings of democracy and social justice, and their relationship to an altered form of modern liberal consciousness. The fourth chapter focuses on educational critiques motivated by neo-Marxist, feminist, and racial/ethnic scholarship. Central to the radical analysis is an examination of structures of domination in schools and the society at large. Chapter 5 highlights the central tenets of postmodern analyses and points out difficult paradoxes. The sixth chapter suggests alternative ways to conceptualize the nature of freedom, character, and community. It also offers alternative ways to think about work in the United States. Chapter 7 suggests strategies for the progressive renewal of schools and universities, focusing on curriculum debates and issues. An index is included. (Contains 322 references.) (LMI)